

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested. Claims 1-3 and 5-18 are pending. Claims 1-3 and 5-18 stand rejected.

§103 Rejection

Claims 1-3 and 5-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,046,434 to Breezer (Breezer) in view of Japanese Patent No. 2001-270,525 to Ishizuka Glass (Glass).

The Examiner agrees that Breezer does teach a peripheral lip (28), which is continuous around the periphery of the load-bearing member (22). However, the Examiner contends that while the lip (28) is necessary during manufacture, the lip (28) has no function after manufacture and, as such, the lip (28) can be removed and replaced with the projection taught by Glass. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Breezer discloses a load-bearing member (22), which is formed from two separate sheets, an upper sheet (24) and a lower sheet (26), of thermoplastic material (Figures 5 and 6). The projection (A'), as referenced by the Examiner, is a peripheral lip (28) that is formed by the edges of the upper sheet (24) and the lower sheet (26) of thermoplastic material when they are joined together around a periphery of the load-bearing member (22) (col. 3, lines 5-10). The peripheral lip (28) must be continuous about the periphery of the load-bearing member (22) to effectuate joining the upper sheet (24) and the lower sheet (26) together to form the load-bearing member (22) of Breezer.

The peripheral lip (28) of Breezer is functional, functioning as the “joint” between the upper sheet (24) and the lower sheet (26) to form the load-bearing member (22), while runners and sprues are merely in-process excess material inherent in a manufacturing process. That is, runners and sprues are used as a delivery system in the manufacture of plastic parts to merely supply hot, liquid material from a heating source to a mold where the hot, liquid plastic material is cooled to form a plastic part. The runners and sprues are subsequently “knocked off” after the cooling process. While it may be common practice in plastic molding to remove runners and sprues after the manufacture of a plastic part produced by a manufacturing process that requires them, runners and sprues are *not* used in twin-sheet thermoforming and it is *not* common practice to remove the “joint” that joins two plastic parts joined together by a thermoforming process. Removal of the peripheral lip (28) would compromise the structural integrity of the load-bearing member (22), thereby reducing the load-bearing capability of

the load-bearing member (22). As such, removing the peripheral lip (28) of Breezer would destroy a purpose of the load-bearing member (22).

Further, one of the benefits of the twin-sheet thermoforming process is to provide a product of complex geometry and increased structural integrity while reducing and/or eliminating secondary processing. However, both *removing* the peripheral lip (28) and *replacing* the peripheral lip (28) with the projection taught by Glass, as suggested by the Examiner, would *add* unnecessary secondary processing steps thereby eliminating a benefit of the twin-sheet thermoforming process.

Therefore, both *removing* the peripheral lip (28) and *replacing* the peripheral lip (28) of Breezer with the projection taught by Glass, as suggested by the Examiner, would defeat the purpose of the peripheral lip (28), i.e. to join the upper sheet (24) to the lower sheet (26) to form the load-bearing member (22) of Breezer and also defeat the purpose of the twin-sheet thermoforming process by adding unnecessary secondary processing. The claimed invention requires “at least one projection extending outwardly from at least one of the corner edges, wherein the at least one projection is not continuous about a periphery of the deck.” As such, the claimed invention is allowable over Breezer in view of Glass and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Applicant believes that no fees are necessary, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1984 for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

/John E. Carlson/

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